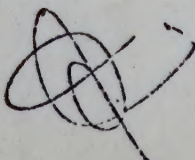


THE KEHEWIN SCHOOL  
A WORKING PHILOSOPHY



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## THE KEHEWIN SCHOOL

### A Working Philosophy


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The purpose of education, among any people, is to prepare each person for life, and to develop his full potential as a human being. In most cases education prepares people to function as useful members in their own society, and educational processes therefore evolve from the needs and the living patterns of that particular society. Kehewin is a developing, enterprising community that is striving for complete freedom and self-sufficiency. Its people wish to equip themselves with the training and new awareness necessary to make them a valuable part of Canadian society, and at the same time return to the well-founded values and life-style that was part of their own ancient culture. Education at Kehewin will therefore have two roles to satisfy: Like the educational systems of most Western communities, it must offer to the people of Kehewin the type and scope of training necessary to allow them to function as useful and proud members of Canadian society and, unlike most other educational systems, it must generate among the Indian People a strong awareness of the

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worth of their own culture, so that they may go through life with a feeling of confidence and dignity in being Indian.

If education at Kehewin is to serve these purposes, it is obvious that the schools and teaching methods and attitudes of most Albertan communities will not be adequate for Kehewin. The complete Anglo-European-Canadian educational system is a reflection of its own culture, and is designed to instill in its children a respect for the Anglo-European-Canadian culture. The Alberta school curriculums, their learning materials such as textbooks, their teaching methods and attitudes, and their school environment, are all consistent with the Anglo-European-Canadian philosophy and life-style. It is therefore very relevant to Canadian children, because it is meaningful to their lives. But for Indian People such a system would be irrelevant, because it takes no notice of the special background and unique life-style of the Indian. In many cases, in fact, it prevents an Indian from attaining a full development, by exposing him to a totally different culture which is opposed in several ways to his own ways of thinking and living. Education at Kehewin, it is obvious, must be relevant to the Indian People of Kehewin; it must teach subject matter that prepares the Indian for his roles in the two cultures, and it must adopt teaching methods, attitudes and environments that contain the best aspects of the traditional Indian ways of learning.

The School at Kehewin should be designed, therefore, according to a philosophy which is guided by these principles:





1. Indian children must, as far as possible, be allowed to learn in the context of their own culture and through the medium of their own language. Indian teachers trained in Indian ways must be present in every classroom. A knowledge of English must be acquired as a tool for life in non-Indian society, but not as the chief medium of learning. Non-Indian teachers must be trained to understand and appreciate the Indian culture before they can be entrusted with the education of Indian children.
2. The educational system must regard each person as an individual, with unique learning needs and abilities, and his education must relate to them. Students must not always be taught in large groups, at a pace which suits no one; each child must learn at his own pace and according to his own learning inclinations, and teachers must respond to the needs of each student in a way which is not possible in large group teaching conditions.
3. The learning process must not be limited to the old-fashioned "classroom"; learning must be allowed to take place, whenever possible, in a natural setting reflecting the Indian's traditional closeness with nature. It must always be related to the processes of nature and life, so that it never loses its relevance to the life-needs of the student. Even the Western subjects must be taught in such a way that their importance in the Indian's daily living is understood. If the child must spend part of his day in the "classroom", the





environment must be such that it makes the learning process an exciting experience.

4. Wherever possible, an ungraded system of teaching must be adopted, so that each individual is encouraged to follow the path of learning that suits him, and not be hampered by the rigid "classroom and textbook" format of most schools. The student must have free access, at all times, to an abundance of learning materials, so that he is encouraged to discover knowledge through his own efforts. Thus the educational system must be mainly a learning experience rather than a teaching experience.

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These educational goals, which are necessary if Kehewin is to have a sound educational system, cannot be reached through the typical schoolhouse, with its straight rows of equal-sized classrooms, its strict teachers lecturing to a group of thirty boys and girls, and its equal "periods" of lectures arranged on a rigid military arrangement.

The learning materials, such as books, magazines, maps, pictures, tapes, slides, and so on must not be available to the student only in a "classroom", and only in the form and at the time when the teacher wants to offer it; a student must be able to get any of these materials whenever he needs them, from their place of storage in a learning materials centre, or Resources Centre. The equal-sized classrooms must be replaced by a grouping of rooms of various shapes and sizes





designed for all the different types of learning situations: single students wishing to study or listen to a tape alone; a small group of students engaged in group discussion or problem-solving; a large group of students watching a slide presentation or listening to a lecture; and so on. Thus the traditional schoolhouse can be replaced by a Resources Centre set in the middle of a group of learning spaces; and at the focus of the design effort will be the individual student seeking knowledge through all the sources freely available to him; and learning will happen in a number of different rooms that are each suited to a particular type of learning situation.

This Resources Centre must not be available only to children, and only during limited "school hours". It should be a Community Resources Centre, open to the whole community all the time, so that there is no limitation on the learning opportunities for all members of the community, young and old. The Centre will serve as the storehouse for all the educational and informative materials of the Reserve, and the whole tribe will benefit from this shared wealth of resource.

Where the assistance of teachers is needed, they will be available to instruct and guide anyone wishing to learn; the various learning spaces will be used at all times of the day, including the evening and night hours when most schools remain idle. Thus "going to school" will not be a miserable experience for the children of Kehewin; "coming to satisfy one's desire to learn" will become a productive experience which everyone on the Reserve will enjoy.

It is important that this school not develop as an isolated facility functioning aloof from the rest of the community, because education





is an important and integral part of the whole effort of development and growth at Kehewin. The school must be thought of as a very necessary part of the community, and it must be so designed and located as to be closely interwoven with the daily life on the Reserve. Just as the resources of the "school" are available to everyone, all the other facilities normally provided in a school will also be shared and enjoyed by the whole community. The gymnasium will be designed not just for the children of the school, but for the indoor sports and recreational activities of the whole tribe. There will be a museum of natural history and Indian history in this complex, which will be not only an educational space for children, but also the Reserve's collection of all the materials, data and knowledge relating to the Indian culture. The spaces provided in this school for gatherings of children will also be used as a dance hall and for a number of other social activities, in the evenings and on weekends. The school will therefore no longer be just a simple group of classrooms --- it will be the educational, recreational, cultural and social centre for the whole reserve. It will not be a separate building, aloof from the rest of the community; it will be an intrinsic part of the Kehewin Village and will always be at the "heart" of the daily life of Kehewin. It will demonstrate, by its own design and usage, how all the different daily activities of a group of people can be integrated into one complex, giving the people a new strength through unity and oneness.

The interior of the school will be imaginatively designed to enhance the whole learning process. Because the entire facility --- and not just the classrooms --- is a learning centre, every space in the building,





including the corridors, the mechanical rooms and so on, will function as a learning space. Long, narrow corridors will not exist here; each room will be specially shaped to suit the activity inside the room, and these rooms will be clustered around concourse spaces so that corridors are kept to a minimum. These concourses will be "student spaces", and can be used for a variety of purposes, such as student lounging, small-scale dramatic presentations, art and craft displays, and so on. Colours will be chosen with consideration for their effects on the moods, attitudes and performing ability of people, and artwork will be permanently displayed in concourse areas reflecting the Indian culture. Mosaics will be displayed on the walls, relating tales of the Indian past. Lighting, sound, and other engineering systems will be carefully selected so that they are suited to each type of learning activity taking place in the school. Constructional methods and materials, and other technological developments that are in wide use today in this country, will be brought to the benefit of the people of Kehewin, but they will be used only where they help to improve the learning condition. To reflect the ever-changing and growing educational needs of Kehewin, the school and all its community-shared facilities will be designed as organic bodies which are always ready to grow and change. The design of interior partitions, the construction, and the overall planning will all be designed to allow the spaces to constantly adapt to changing needs, so that the whole complex will always be relevant to the community's needs.

Thus the Kehewin School will show, by its design and the way it is used, that the learning process is something that happens throughout





a person's daily life, in many different ways, in many different kinds of spaces --- and that the Indian path to knowledge is truly an exciting one.





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